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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Feminine Ideal in Sport

by

Leslie Stewart



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF Master of Arts

Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Fall 1988

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the ways in which the feminine ideal is currently manifested in sport and the effect this has on determining the "what" and "how" of women's participation in sport. The masculine gaze is also examined with respect to the controlling influence that it exerts over women's physical activity. It is argued that, in certain sports, women athletes are connoted as being sexually available to the masculine viewer, and that this defines that sport instance as pornographic. Some pornography is then examined with respect to its use of sport imagery, and the implications of these findings briefly discussed.

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Finally, thanks to Michigan, for showing us what it might mean to live outside of the "arrogating eye."

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Chapter I

Introduction

Sport' is a pervasive force in our society. The television programming of recent months has been replete with features on various aspects of the upcoming summer Olympics, and with fall approaching, talk of baseball playoffs and hockey trades resounds. As these examples indicate, sport is largely defined as a masculine enterprise, and this has tremendous implications for women's participation in sport.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the ways in which the feminine' ideal is currently manifested in sport and how the ideal acts to define and limit women's sport participation. Although the ideal is mitigated by social and historical factors, and thus what is considered to exemplify feminine beauty varies, three factors have remained constant: 1) the ideal is defined by a male-dominated, patriarchal society, and, therefore, women are categorized as Other and as subordinate to men, 2) heterosexuality is a major premise of the feminine ideal, and 3) the ideal acts to limit women's self-determination. It is important to note that oppression occurs on the basis of factors other than

'Throughout this paper I use the term "sport" in its everyday sense to refer to a broad range of physical activity. Thus, relatively unstructured and noncompetitive activity such as jogging, and highly structured and competitive professional athletics are both subsumed under "sport."

"Feminine" and "femininity," "masculine" and "masculinity" are used in the thesis to refer to the culturally defined attributes which women and men, respectively, are expected to embody.

gender. Race, and class are important variables which must be included in order to produce a more comprehensive analysis of women's sport experience. However, my focus here is on gender oppression and I realize that my analysis relates primarily to the experience of white, middle class women and men.

The feminine ideal is examined in terms of the controlling influence that men exert over women's sport. A further aspect of this control is explored in the masculine gaze at women. It is argued that men are subjects in the world and women the objects of men's perception, and thus the masculine gaze is one of authority. Further, because men are perceived to be the experts in sport, the masculine gaze at women's sport is the definitive one. Women's sport is always viewed *with reference to* men's sport. The look of men restricts women's participation and denigrates women athletes and women's physical activity in that it maintains women's position as Other and as subordinate.

The masculine gaze further denigrates women athletes when it constitutes them as sexual objects for the use and/or contemplation of a masculine subject. I argue that the connotation of the woman athlete - or woman in a sport context - as sexually available to, or providing sexual titillation for, the man viewer, defines that sport instance as pornographic. Some physical activities and various aspects of sport are examined to determine how women are constituted as sexual objects in a sport context. Finally,

pornography is examined with regard to its use of sport imagery, and the messages conveyed by such images are briefly discussed.

Contributions of the Thesis

Studying sport as a cultural form enables us to learn about our society, and focussing on gender and sport tells us about the relationship of power between women and men in sport and in our culture generally. This thesis uses the work of various feminist theorists to analyze and interpret women's experience of the feminine ideal in sport. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the feminist analysis of women's experience in sport, especially to the ways in which that experience is controlled and denigrated by men, and to the central role that men's control of women's sexuality plays in this.

In addition, I hope that the thesis will raise awareness regarding the overlaps between sport and pornography and suggest further questions for study. It seems to me that such overlaps are occurring more frequently, and that the messages conveyed in these images impinge directly upon the woman athlete, but have larger implications as well for women's existence. In becoming aware of and analyzing such images, we can hopefully take action to begin to create our own visions of women athletes and women's sport and explore what truly self-determined sport for women would look like.

Chapter II

The Feminine Ideal

Historically, the ideal of feminine beauty has undergone many transformations. A brief scan of the 1900s gives an indication of some of the vastly different forms that the feminine ideal has taken. In the 1920s the ideal was characterized by the youthful, vivacious look of the flapper, while the 1930s ideal was one of the the sensual, sophisticated Garbo. Marilyn Monroe, who simultaneously exuded the qualities of childlike adolescence and voluptuous sensuality, represented the feminine ideal of the '50s, while the '60s marked the beginning of an emphasis on extreme thinness for women which still exists today (Banner, 1983; 279 - 287).

The current feminine ideal, as it is depicted in television and magazine advertising, is a young, white woman, very thin, fairly tall with long legs, large breasts and a small waist. Long hair, full lips and thick eyebrows (brought into vogue only recently by actress Brooke Shields) also seem to be salient features. Further, the fitness craze of the past two decades has also made stylish the "toned muscles" look, a look characterized by lean, defined muscles as opposed to muscle bulk.

Regardless of how it has been defined, it has been important for women to emulate the feminine ideal.' And,

'Of course, there have always been women who have resisted conforming to the feminine ideal. Women involved in the clothes reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century, feminists, lesbians, and present-day groups such as

despite the fact that the ideal has been defined in dramatically different ways, several factors have remained constant: 1) the ideal is defined by a male-dominated, patriarchal society, and as such, woman, and thus the feminine ideal, are always defined as Other and as subordinate to men, 2) heterosexuality is a major premise of the feminine ideal, and 3) the ideal serves to limit women's self-determination.

Constant Factors in the Feminine Ideal

Woman as Other

De Beauvoir, in discussing the question "what is a woman?", says that

humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other (De Beauvoir, 1953; xvi).

Thus, what is masculine represents the "absolute human type" (xv), while what is feminine is Other. De Beauvoir writes that "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought" (p. xvii), that the concepts of the Self and the Other have existed as long as humankind has existed. One cannot establish oneself as the Self except in relation to

'(cont'd) MediaWatch have been among those who have struggled against the notion of a male-defined image of feminine beauty. Generally, throughout the paper, I use the term "woman" in the sense that to be a woman is to take on the socially constructed attributes of femininity.

the Other; "the subject can be posed only in being opposed - he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object" (p. xvii). But the relationship between the two concepts is one of reciprocity. That is, while a group identifies itself as One - the Self, and a second group as Other, the second group concurrently identifies *itself* as One, and the first group as Other.

Yet, this reciprocal relationship does not exist between woman and man. Woman is characterized as "pure otherness" and man as "the sole essential" (p. xvii). De Beauvoir argues that women, as a group, do not assume subjectivity because they do not share a common history, or religion, or even a common struggle. Rather, women "live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men - fathers or husbands - more firmly than they are to other women" (p. xix). While women obtain certain benefits in attaching themselves to men, they must surrender their claim to subjectivity and assume the position of Other.

But MacKinnon (1987) argues that gender is not simply a matter of difference or Otherness, but a "question of power, specifically of male supremacy and female subordination" (p. 40). She writes that "men are as different from women as women are from men" (p. 42), and if gender were simply a matter of difference, then what would it matter? That is, difference in itself is *just* difference. Gender, however, is

much more than this, it is an "inequality of power" (p. 8). Gender is not predicated on difference but on dominance. It is a hierarchy in which men dominate women, and where that which is masculine is valued over that which is feminine, regardless of how the constructs of masculinity and femininity vary historically. That women and men are systematically deprived or rewarded by virtue of their status as women and men necessitates that the two groups be distinct. As MacKinnon notes, "Gender might not even code as difference . . . were it not for its consequences for social power" (p. 40). Gender does not simply mark the differences between femininity and masculinity, it signifies the power relationship between the two, and to be a woman is to be inferior and subordinate to man.

Heterosexuality and the Feminine Ideal

Rich (1980) argues that the institution of heterosexuality plays a central role in the patriarchal oppression of women. She states that "heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution*" (Rich, 1980; 637), an institution which

asserts that primary love between the sexes is "normal," that women *need* men as social and economic protectors, for adult sexuality, and for psychological completion; that the heterosexually constituted family is the basic social unit; that women who do not attach their primary intensity to men must be, in functional terms, condemned to an even more devastating outsiderhood than their outsiderhood as women (Rich, 1980; 657, italics in original).

Rich uses the term "compulsory heterosexuality" in recognition of the myriad ways in which men's power over women, a "pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness" (Rich, 1980; 640), acts to enforce heterosexuality upon women. The concept of compulsory heterosexuality is important here because it provides the underpinnings for the defining of the feminine ideal. That is, a mainstay of the feminine ideal has been that women who typify the ideal will be considered attractive and desirable by men. And, in fact, it is part of the feminine ideal as well, that women want to be considered attractive and desirable by men. Furthermore, heterosexual pairing acts to reinforce traditional sex roles where women are relegated to the roles of nurturer and care-giver, and men are expected to be strong and unemotional. Compulsory heterosexuality reinforces male domination, the systematic devaluing of women, and men's right of access to women (Rich, 1980; 638 - 640).

Cottin Pogrebin makes the point that

sexism and homophobia go hand in hand. The homophobe *needs* sharp sex-role boundaries to help him avoid transgressing to the "other side." His terror is that he is not different enough from the "opposite" sex, and that his "masculine" facade may not always protect him from the "femininity" within himself that he learned as a boy to hate and repress. Homophobia is, at bottom, contempt for everything female (1980; 288, italics in original).

Just as homophobia reinforces sexism, so too can homophobia serve to strengthen the institution of heterosexuality. This is not to say that all heterosexuals

are homophobic, but rather that among the forces maintaining compulsory heterosexuality are the fear and loathing of lesbians and gay men. Defining lesbian and gay lifestyles as "perverse" and "evil" promotes fear and simultaneously affirms the notion of heterosexual lifestyles as "natural" and "good." This fear of lesbians and gays is manifested in many ways, including "gay bashing" and the removal of children, by the courts, from their lesbian mothers.

Thus, women who transgress the boundaries of what it is to be a "woman," are faced with the label "lesbian" or "dyke," and these labels have been used to keep women afraid and divided (Bunch, 1976; 61). Conversely, women who bond with men benefit from a number of heterosexual privileges, "those actual or promised benefits for a woman who stays in line: legitimacy, economic security, social acceptance, legal and physical protection. Through these privileges, a woman is given a stake in behaving properly and in maintaining her own oppression" (Bunch, 1976; 100).

Yet, throughout history, women have chosen to live as lesbians, and in so doing have presented a challenge to compulsory heterosexuality, to men's right of access to women, and to patriarchy. That their existence has been denied, erased or defined as "illness," is testament to the threat that lesbian existence represents to male control (Rich, 1980; 648 - 649). The institution of heterosexuality places women in a position of subservience to men, reinforces limiting sex roles and limits women's

self-determination. We shall see that the institution of compulsory heterosexuality has tremendous implications as well for women's participation in sport.

Women's Self-Determination

It is obvious then that the feminine ideal defines for women what is beautiful, how they should look, what is acceptable and what is not. In defining woman as Other and as heterosexual, man has defined woman with reference to himself. Furthermore, whatever women are allowed to be, they are always regarded as less than men. The ideal thus serves to limit women's potential and to deny them self-determination.

Valverde (1985; 133) suggests that in present-day society, the feminine ideal not only obscures women's self-determination but is harmful in other ways as well. She argues that the pernicious messages conveyed by mainstream advertising and the internalization of this feminine ideal by many women, affects both their physical and emotional well-being. It leads to the utilization of dangerous weight-loss methods and eating disorders such as bulimia, results in women wearing "hazardous" or unsafe clothing (such as high heels and extremely tight jeans), and affects women's emotional health in that they constantly monitor and worry about their appearance. Lisa Steele (1985; 72) critiques magazines like Vogue and Bazaar as teaching women how to turn themselves into "living sculpture;" walking, talking objects on display. Thus women's self-determination,

their ability to define and explore their own potential and limits, is undermined by the importance of their embodying the feminine ideal.

Chapter III

The Feminine Ideal in Sport

In sport too, there is a feminine ideal at work. Again, while this ideal has taken many different forms, the same factors have remained constant: 1)the ideal is defined by a male-dominated, patriarchal society, and thus women are defined as Other and subordinate to men, 2)heterosexuality is a major premise of the feminine ideal, and 3)the image serves to limit women's self-determination. Before examining these factors more closely, let us look at the feminine ideal as it currently exists in sport.

The Manifestation of the Feminine Ideal in Sport

The feminine ideal in sport is manifested in the types of activities in which women participate, as well as in how they participate.

Sport has traditionally been defined as masculine because it embodies aggression, competition and success, which are considered masculine traits. Within the sports world, there is an unquestioned assumption of the irreconcilability between feminine desirability and athletic prowess: the femininity/sport conflict. For a woman to be aggressive, competitive and successful is to risk her femininity (Hall & Richardson, 1982; 80).

While women have, at different times, been "allowed" to be aggressive, competitive and successful in sport and still maintain their "femininity," there have always existed male-defined boundaries of appropriate feminine behaviour. Women's participation in sport has been defined and/or limited by this feminine/masculine dichotomy in three ways:

1)certain sports are seen as being acceptable or more acceptable for women than others, 2)certain sports have been "adapted" for women, and 3)certain sports are considered unacceptable for women.

Thinking about women's "acceptable" participation in sport brings to mind my high school physical education classes where I was outraged by the discrepancies between the girls' and boys' classes. Every two weeks or so, the girls were required to line up for inspection, the result of which made up part of our final mark. Inspection consisted of presenting the requisite items: a blue, one-piece bloomer with our first names sewn on the front and full names sewn on the back (I was especially peeved about the uniform because it restricted movement and chafed under the arms, which served to restrict movement even further), a towel with our initials sewn on it, white gym socks (also initialized), running shoes, soap, deoderant, and gym bag. The uniform, towel and socks had to be freshly laundered or marks were deducted.

This was in direct contrast to the rowdy group of boys who ran around in the adjacent gym in ragged t-shirts that barely clung together in one piece, various coloured shorts and, to our horror, unmatched socks. Obviously, there was a very different emphasis in the two classes. I was outraged then by the discrepancy and unfairness of the situation. I would carry my analysis further now to say that we were being groomed to be proper young ladies, with cleanliness,

organization and conformity being the emphasized attributes. The boys on the other hand, were learning that what was important for them was physical activity with abandon, and just general roughhousing with their peers; physical activity with abandon was never a part of the girls' curriculum.'

Traditionally, women's participation in sport has been most acceptable in those activities which have an aesthetic quality and in which appearance is an important factor - gymnastics, figure skating, diving, and synchronized swimming are all examples of this type of sport (Felshin, 1974; 205). Each of these sports has an expressive quality, an element of grace. Obviously, sports that have aesthetic quality and appearance as their major components serve to reinforce traditional female sex roles. Also, it is important to note that, in such sports, it is the body itself and its movement that is emphasized, not some external goal like putting the ball through the hoop in a basketball game, for instance. It is the body itself that is judged.

Lenskyj makes the point that this emphasis on appearance necessitates artifice. That is, that "femininity

'Kathryn Morgan (1982) suggests that while schools may have largely "cleaned up" sexism in their textbooks, sexist assumptions are prevalent in the hidden curriculum. She asks, for instance, what children infer about movement, strength, activity and passivity when their school abides by a dress code which forbids girls to wear pants, or when boys are consistently assigned chores that involve lifting heavy objects, for example, even though the biggest and strongest students in the class are girls (p. 173).

requires artifice - the deliberate effort to convey youthfulness, ease, naturalness, grace and charm when, in fact, concentration, strain and the wear and tear of life are women's real experience" (Lenskyj, 1984; 67). Perhaps the most obvious illustration of such artifice in sport is the smiling countenance of the women athletes as they perform strenuous and difficult manoeuvres. Cline and Spender suggest that

For twentieth-century white women, the smile is the equivalent of the nineteenth-century black servants' shuffle. It is an indication that a victim is acquiescing in her own oppression. Women are encouraged to show their cheerful compliance on their faces (1987; 98).

Perhaps the smile of the woman athlete reassures the judges and the audience that although she is displaying the "masculine" qualities of physical adeptness and strength, she still knows her "rightful" place, which is one of subordination.

Individual as opposed to team sports also qualify as more acceptable sports for women. Boutilier and SanGiovanni (1983; 43, 44) suggest that "Sport is another segment of life which pits woman against woman and certifies that the female-to-male bond overrides and outweighs any bond between women." Women are not encouraged to work together as a team as men are, but rather are given strokes (greater social acceptance) for remaining separate and competing as individuals. This situation is much the same for many women in their social lives where they compete against one another for men.

The second category which serves to limit women's participation in sport while also reiterating the femininity of the participant, is the adaptation of certain sports to "allow" for the participation of women (Felshin, 1974; 206). The game of basketball, for example, was modified for female competitors in the early 1900s in the belief that women were more susceptible than men to "heart strain, exhaustion, and jarred reproductive organs" (Twin, 1979; xxv, xxvi). Ringette, the women's tee in golf, and the shortened distance of the women's cycling road race also exemplify this adaptation of sport.

The question arises whether women do not hit a golf ball as far as men because physiologically they are not able to, or because they have never been expected or allowed to. Alison Jaggar argues that

human biology, like the physical environment, is not just a pre-social given, remaining constant throughout the changes in human social life. Instead, it is a result as well as a cause of our system of social organization. . . . In general women have been prevented from developing their capacities for physical speed and strength, and the effects of this prohibition can be seen simply by looking at women's bodies, particularly their upper bodies. The rate at which women's athletic records are being broken and the speed with which women's bodies have changed even over the past decade shows that in the past, social norms have limited the way in which women fulfilled their genetic potential, so that we have no idea of the extent of that potential (1984; 36, 37).

One could argue that this adaptation of sport under the pretext of "protecting" women, or catering to their "inferior abilities," might in fact be for men's benefit. If women were allowed to compete side-by-side with men, it is

conceivable that the latter's claim to athletic superiority might undergo a serious challenge.

Closely connected with the adaptation of sport is the categorization of certain sports as unacceptable for women. These sports are those in which physical contact with an opponent (Hall, 1981; 5) or endurance (Hall & Richardson, 1982; 78) play a major role. Football, ice hockey, wrestling and long distance running and cycling provide a few illustrations. This is not to say, however, that women are totally barred from participation in these sports. But certainly it is evident that a female football or ice hockey player does not have the same opportunity nor receive the same status as does her male counterpart. There is no women's ice hockey in the Olympics for instance, and the 1984 summer Olympics were the first to offer the marathon and road race cycling (although a shorter course than the men's) events for women. Women who participate in these types of sports are generally viewed by society as being somewhat abnormal (Hall & Richardson, 1982; 5) because they are pushing the limits of acceptable feminine behaviour, and crossing over into what had previously been considered "men-only" territory.

Again, the fact that some sports are categorized as off-limits for women may be more a reflection of men's need to maintain dominance rather than any lack of ability on the part of women.

Clothing and Fashion in Women's Sport

Clothing is another aspect of participating in physical activity which is used to reinforce femininity. Fashion has always been an important part of the feminine ideal and this emphasis continues in the sport world as well. Perhaps some women have even become physically active because of the new stylishness available to them while participating.

Running is a good example of an activity which has seen the development of a plethora of stylish clothing. The new clothing has been developed for both women and men, but because fashion has always been an important part of the feminine ideal, it can be argued that the development of stylish clothing specifically for physical activity would appeal especially to women. One of the most obvious things about this new stylish look is the use of pastel, "light" colours for womenswear, and dark, "serious" colours for menswear. This includes footwear, where the same model of shoe is available in pink and light blue for women, and navy and grey for men.

While for serious runners proper clothing has always been important, this highly specialized gear is now visible on participants at all levels of ability. This is not to say that the right type of clothing is not important or does not make a difference to the more casual participant. Rather, the point is that stylish clothing is marketed as the only "acceptable" thing to be wearing while participating in that activity, and that such marketing is often targetted at

women.

For instance, recently, with the popularity of aerobic exercise classes, we have seen the emergence of a new type of exercise apparel for women. It is very similar to the traditional dance leotard, and perhaps it is because of the dance component in aerobic exercise classes (that is, movement to music) that the leotard came to be used for aerobics. The leotards used in aerobics are brightly coloured and are made of a stretchy material that "hugs" the body. They are often low-cut across the breasts and very high-cut over the hips. A more recent adaptation of the one-piece leotard is a two-piece outfit which leaves the midriff bare.

The promotion of this style of dress raises several issues. First of all, the leotard emphasizes the body of the participant. A loose-fitting t-shirt and shorts would allow for the same, if not more, flexibility and freedom of movement. In fact, the leotard inhibits freedom of movement because of the low-cut neckline (one must be aware of keeping one's breasts inside one's leotard) and the constant "riding up" of the legs of the leotard that occurs with stretching.

The concept of limiting or restricting women's movement is an important one. It is in keeping with the notion of women as subdued and controlled. But perhaps more importantly it says that what is important in women's physical activity is that women participate in a way that is

in keeping with the feminine ideal. That is, in the 1980s, it is more important that women wear stylish, colourful clothing that "shows off" their bodies, than that they be able to participate as freely and comfortably as possible. Loose clothing does not highlight the breasts, hips and buttocks the way that the leotard does.

Another issue raised by the use of the leotard is "who is it for?" What type of woman would feel comfortable in a tight-fitting, rather skimpy leotard? Probably not middle-aged or older women, and probably not larger women. The women who look good and feel comfortable in such an outfit are most often women who are thin and who are already fit. In fact, as the testimony of one participant suggests, the thought of wearing such an outfit may be very threatening to many women and may prevent them from participating: "'The older, larger women aren't there any more. And even I sometimes feel out of place next to all those fashionably dressed younger ones'" (Kidd, 1983; 63). Furthermore, Lenskyj observes that until recently when some teaching standards were put in place, aerobic instructors in private clubs were often chosen on the basis of style and looks, a sort of role model for women in the class to emulate (1986; 130).

A third issue raised by the aerobic leotard outfit is a very specific one. It is the development of the "diaper leg," which refers to the high-cut hip of the leotard. Such an outfit necessitates the shaving of pubic hair, in order

to have the contemporary feminine "hairless" look. Hair on North American women, other than on the head of course, is considered unfeminine. Until recently, pubic hair seemed to be considered "acceptable," but with the advent of the diaper leg, this has changed. In order to remain fashionable, feminine and sexy, women must now get rid of pubic hair. Lenskyj states that "The term 'diaper leg' and the return to a child-like state of hairlessness signified the infantilization of the female body, a state hardly compatible with the empowerment that physical fitness might have brought to women" (Lenskyj, 1986; 130 -131).

Women bodybuilders also wear the leotard that is worn by aerobic exercise participants and the same critique applies here. Furthermore, the bikinis worn by women bodybuilders while posing in competitions reveal most of the buttocks so that one wonders why there is a back portion to the suit at all. It could be argued that such a suit (or lack thereof) enables the competitor to display the muscles of the buttocks, but since the male competitors do not wear such revealing attire, this explanation does not make sense. The ultra-revealing bikini exposes the womens' buttocks, a highly sexual part of a woman's body for the male onlooker I think, and reinforces the femininity of the competitor - the strong but sexy apologetic.

Clothing can be seen to reinforce femininity in other sports as well. For instance, in tennis and field hockey, women traditionally wear skirts as opposed to shorts. There

is no reason, other than tradition, for this custom to continue. Again, the skirt serves to reiterate the femininity of the participant in that, in North America, the skirt is a distinctly feminine form of dress.

Furthermore, although the skirt and bloomers worn in tennis and field hockey do not in any way limit the mobility of the participant,⁵ the wearing of a skirt outside of the sport world does limit women's freedom. When wearing a skirt a woman must be conscious of how she sits and how she bends. She may also have to be concerned with volatile weather conditions, lest her skirt "fly up," and open staircases, which enable men to "look up" her skirt. So, symbolically at least, the skirt represents restriction of movement, and it also represents something less than what men have.

Women figure skaters also wear skirts or short dress-like outfits. It is interesting to note in figure skating that men and women perform virtually the same maneuvers, and for both sexes it is the body itself that is judged. It is the body - how it moves, how it flows, its expressiveness - that is important. Why is there then, this difference in dress? Why wouldn't men figure skaters perform in costumes that revealed more of their bodies, as do the women's outfits? Or, if the one-piece suits worn by the men are sufficient for judging purposes, why don't the women competitors wear them, especially since they appear to be

⁵In fact, skirts and bloomers probably allow for more freedom of movement than shorts do, in which case, why aren't the men wearing them? The answer to the question, of course, proves the point.

warmer and therefore more suitable to an ice arena, and also to offer more protection in the case of a fall? The dressing of women in dresses and men in one-piece suits serves to reiterate the femininity and masculinity of each.

Again, this in itself would not be problematic, if femininity and masculinity were simply different ways of being which were equally valued. But, of course, they are not equally valued. To be designated feminine is to be designated as subordinate to that which is masculine. Therefore, dressing women athletes one way and men athletes another maintains the distinction between the two groups and signifies women's subservience to men.

A similar argument can be made with regards to the clothing worn by competitive gymnasts. Once again, women and men competitors perform very similar moves, such that you might expect both to wear the same type of clothing. But this is not the case. The women gymnasts wear a leotard, while their men counterparts wear muscle shirts and shorts or sweat pants with a foot strap. While men's gymnastics has a greater power component and women's gymnastics a greater emphasis on expressiveness and flow, it does not seem that the different outfits serve any purpose relative to the gymnastics maneuvers.

In addition, what strikes me in watching gymnastic competitions is that the woman competitor is constantly tugging at the back of her leotard to pull it down over her buttocks. With the amount of stretching and body extension

that the women gymnasts do, it is inevitable that a one-piece leotard is going to continually "ride up". This must be very annoying. If it is not annoying to the competitors it is annoying to me, as a spectator. Furthermore, it detracts from the aesthetic appeal and flow of the performance, something you would expect competitors, coaches, and judges to be concerned about. The men gymnasts do not seem to have this problem, and I am sure that wearing sweat pants with a foot strap would solve the problem for the women participants. Yet this adaptation is not made.

Feminine attire then, in the form of skirts, pastel colours, and form-fitting clothing is utilized to emphasize the femininity of the woman participants. Also, in sports such as tennis, field hockey, figure skating and gymnastics, where the physical movements performed by women and men are virtually the same, the clothing they wear is quite dissimilar. Furthermore, the trappings of femininity - lace trim on outfits, makeup and hair ribbons - trivialize the woman athlete in that they draw attention to how she looks as opposed to how she performs. She operates in a catch-22, where she is encouraged to participate in keeping with the feminine ideal, which necessitates attention to appearance, and yet, to be concerned about appearance conflicts with the behaviour expected of a serious athlete. A *serious* athlete would be concerned only with *his* performance. The women's outfits serve to accentuate their femininity, and thereby indicate their status as less important and less serious

than their men counterparts.

The Feminization and Cooptation of Exercise

The emphasis on fashionable and feminine dress in women's sport and exercise are examples of the feminization of exercise; that is, some adaptation is made, or some new component introduced which is calculated to appeal to women, or which enables women to participate in a "feminine" way. Pastel clothing, skirts and close-fitting leotards all have this effect. But it is not just clothing which has been implemented to feminize exercise. We have seen, for example, the development and marketing of "soft weights." Soft weights are weighted bands which can be worn around the wrists or ankles, or held in the hand while running or exercising. They are available in a variety of soft, pastel colours.

Obviously, these soft, pliable, colourful weights are much more "appropriate" for the "average" woman than the traditional free-weights or weight-room machines used by men athletes and bodybuilders. These more traditional weights embody the exact opposite traits of the soft weights; they are hard, solid, and, while they may also come in various colours, they are definitely not available in pastels.

Furthermore, the soft weights are very light, and as such are used for toning and shaping, as opposed to the heavier weights needed to significantly increase muscle size. Toning and shaping are "more appropriate" goals for

women than is building muscle mass. This feminization of strength-building activities again reestablishes the feminine/masculine dichotomy. Therefore, while women are participating in what was previously thought to be a "men only" activity and perhaps challenging the status quo, they are actually participating in an adapted way, a way which clearly demarcates feminine and masculine realms.

Exercise as a means of increasing heterosexual appeal has also been used to entice women to become physically active. Exercise, and especially aerobics and weight training in the 1980s, are promoted as activities which enable weight loss, tone muscles and produce a "shaplier" body, and it is supposedly these characteristics which men find attractive in women. The atmosphere of many private sports clubs, some of which have installed lounges and bars to facilitate socializing between patrons, reiterate the notion of exercise to increase heterosexual appeal (Lenskyj, 1986; 131).

A further aspect of feminization is the sexualization of some of women's exercise; that is, the eroticization of women's bodies in a sport context. A 1986 Globe and Mail article, "The Lioness in Winter" (Hawthorn, Nov. 15, 1986; C1), is a case in point. The article profiles curler Marilyn Darte and lauds her as having achieved the impossible: "She had made curling sexy." The article describes "the riveting image of Darte, a lioness in winter placing shots with abandon, her skirt flapping coyly and allowing sharp eyes to

catch a glimpse of her bloomers."

The author sees Darte as having injected some much needed "life" into the otherwise staid sport of curling, and this shot-in-the-arm has mainly taken the form of a mini-skirt, brightly coloured bloomers (which Darte is not afraid of showing), and exuberant, brash behaviour like "sticking her broom between her legs and riding up the ice." In the rather slow sport of women's curling, Darte's appearance and behaviour give spectators something to keep their attention. The author makes no suggestion that men's curling would benefit from similar behaviour; that the men donning tight pants would give the sport a much-needed boost. On the contrary, such behaviour would take away from the serious nature of the men's game. Women's curling, on the other hand, is seen to benefit from behaviour which sexualizes the game, and which reinforces the "feminine" attributes of the participants.'

The cooptation of women's exercise is closely related to this concept of feminization, but the two are distinct. In becoming physically active and taking control of their bodies and their health, women present a challenge to patriarchal notions of women as weak and passive. This

'There are several other sports in which sexualization of the women athletes occurs; bodybuilding, gymnastics, figure skating and aerobics. These sports differ from the curling example because in them, sexualization plays a much larger role. That is, Marilyn Darte is a specific illustration of the sexualization of women's sport, but in the sports just listed, the sexualization of women is *inherent* in the sport as it currently exists. The requisite sexualization of the women athletes required by these sports necessitates further analysis, which will be undertaken in Chapter 5.

challenge is a potentially liberating one for women, since physical activity can enable them to get in touch with their own bodies, define their own self-image, develop strength and bond with other women. Yet, the potentially liberating effects of women's exercise are coopted when the activities in which women are participating are feminized in order to make women's participation in them "acceptable." The boundaries of women's "appropriate" participation may be stretched, but the activity still serves to reiterate the active woman's femininity. In addition, women's participation for the sole purposes of weight loss or increasing heterosexual appeal represent a cooptation of women's exercise because women are participating only in order to better fulfill the male-defined feminine ideal.

Women's Bodybuilding: A Closer Look at the Feminization and Cooptation of Women's Exercise

The fitness craze of the 1970s and '80s has seen the evolvment of the muscular woman. The muscular woman directly challenges the current image of the feminine ideal because no longer is woman weak and passive; she is strong and actively shaping her strength.

But a closer look at the world of women's bodybuilding reveals that perhaps the notion of the muscular woman is not as revolutionary as it may appear. As women have moved into fitness, the image of a strong woman has become a more acceptable one, and we have seen the feminization and

cooptation of female muscle and strength. Muscles on women, and the whole arena of strength-building activities, has been feminized and adaptations made which make the sport more "acceptable" for the participation of women. Once again we have male judgement of female activity and appearance such that it is not only all right for woman to look and be muscular, but men like women to look this way. Therefore, the strong woman, who was presenting a challenge to the patriarchal notion of the feminine ideal, is redefined as "sexy" and desirable to men, thereby deflating the challenge.

Even in serious women bodybuilders, who have much greater muscle bulk than the average fit woman who works out with soft weights or lifts weights as part of a fitness routine, cooptation still takes place. The film "Pumping Iron II, the Women" provides some insight into this phenomenon. The film is a docudrama which focusses on three women bodybuilders as they prepare for a major competition.⁷ Rachel McLish is a very attractive - in terms of the feminine ideal - and very "feminine" woman. By feminine here I mean that she employs many stereotypically "feminine" behaviours; she pouts, bats her eyes seductively and is obsessed with her appearance. Carla Dunlop is a little more muscular than Rachel, and is also a very "attractive" woman. In addition, Carla appears as a

⁷There is actually a fourth woman competitor who receives some attention in the film, but I do not perceive her role as important to this analysis.

well-rounded, articulate person, more mature and less self-centred than Rachel. The third competitor is Bev Francis, a former power-lifter from Australia and by far the most muscular woman in the competition (Posner, 1985; 101).

According to the requirements of (male) bodybuilding competitions, in which muscle delineation and bulk are major determining factors (Gaines & Butler, 1981), it is obvious who should be declared the winner. What ensues however, are several debates among the judges regarding what determines feminine beauty, and what is acceptable in woman bodybuilders. There is agreement, although not consensus, that muscle delineation with some bulk is appropriate, but bulging muscles rivaling those found in male competitors is unacceptable. One judge remarks that she thinks "'it would be a total disaster if Bev Francis won. She does not respect what women want to look like'" (Irving, 1985; 21). The outcome is the crowning of Carla Dunlop, a good compromise between the extremes represented by McLish and Francis.

Cooptation of the image of the strong woman has occurred because it is the image of the strong but feminine woman that is celebrated, not the image of "brute strength" and muscle mass as exemplified by Bev Francis. Instead of rewarding Francis on the basis of bodybuilding criteria, there are ongoing debates about what constitutes femininity and what is appropriate for women bodybuilders. Therefore, while the women bodybuilders have pushed the limits somewhat, it is obvious that there are definite boundaries

which are not to be exceeded. It is important to note as well, that the women themselves do not take part, except indirectly, in defining these boundaries. Rather, they strive to attain the ideal that has been established for them, in this instance, by the male bodybuilding world.

There exists an apologetic in women's bodybuilding; the constant assurance that "we may be strong, but we're sexy too." "Apologetics are constructed and promulgated in an effort to reinforce the socially acceptable aspect of the action and to minimize the perceived violation of the current social norm" (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; 34). A case in point is Trix Rosen's book Strong & Sexy: The New Body Beautiful (1983). The book consists of profiles, written as well as pictorial, of several women bodybuilders. The women that Rosen focusses on are obviously serious bodybuilders. That is, they are not merely athletic, "toned" women, but have trained hard to add muscle to their bodies and then to define that muscle.

Yet, the manner in which Rosen chooses to photograph the women negates the challenging statement of power and strength that might well be made. The women are depicted as seductive and coy. They are posed in positions of vulnerability; both hands behind the head, back to the camera and looking coyly over the shoulder into the camera lens. Many of the women are pictured partially clothed or with props such as feathers and flowing sheets draped over them, suggesting that they are naked underneath; not only

naked, but because of the seductive quality of the photographs, available to the viewer. A "here I am, strong and sexy, come and get me" sort of look pervades.

The props and the vulnerable poses serve to eroticize the women bodybuilders and to connote them as available to the viewer.* The muscle is eroticized and the women declared beautiful and desirable by men, therefore weakening the impact of the possible statement of female strength and power. As Lenskyj says, "Equating muscle with femininity and eroticism was not necessarily progressive; it could easily be distorted and coopted as yet another measure of heterosexual glamour among competing women" (Lenskyj, 1986; 133).

Rosen asserts that bodybuilding

. . . is a natural outgrowth of feminism - to be concerned, respectful and proud of our bodies, and to build a healthy relationship between our bodies, minds and sexuality. The physicality of a muscular body radiates a sense of determination and beauty. Muscles are a metaphor for mental strength and achievement, reflecting creative imagination: you visualize what you want to look like, your ideal of proportion and muscularity, and then create that form (Rosen, 1983; 9).

Certainly I would agree with Rosen that there are women bodybuilders who participate for themselves, and who, through bodybuilding, build a healthy relationship between their bodies, minds and sexuality. Yet one cannot help but -----

*I am assuming here a masculine viewer, as the poses are so consistent with those found in pornographic magazines. Even though the viewer may be female, I would argue that if she accepts the images as she sees them, then she is viewing them with patriarchal eyes, and is, in fact also a "masculine" viewer. This concept of the masculine viewer will be developed in Chapter 4.

note the incongruity between Rosen's statement and the type of book she has produced. The images in the book do not suggest a healthy relationship between body, mind and sexuality, but only reiterate the patriarchal notion of female sexuality as coy, seductive and subordinate to men. These images do nothing to challenge the limiting notions of femininity and subordination against which women struggle everyday, and therefore, I would argue, they are not conducive to the development of a "healthy" woman.

In addition, I would question Rosen's statement that women involved in bodybuilding create their own "ideal of proportion and muscularity" and then work toward achieving it. In bodybuilding, as in life, this ideal is created for the women (as it is for the men competitors), and whoever comes closest to the designated ideal, wins. Furthermore, achieving this ideal often means taking serious health risks. Bodybuilders virtually starve themselves in an attempt to lose as much body fat as possible so that the "cut" - the clean muscle delineation - is as visible as possible. In a recent television show called "Bodytalk" (Oct. 3, 1987), a former competitor states that just prior to competition "Your head's spinning because your diet's been driving you crazy," indicating the extreme effects of the bodybuilder's pre-competition eating patterns. It has also been suggested that women, as well as men, bodybuilders use dangerous anabolic steroids in order to acquire extra muscle mass. Finally, one must consider the tremendous

stress, physical and otherwise, that bodybuilders experience due to their strenuous training regimes.

It is difficult to uncover the self-determination and health benefits to which Rosen alludes in this type of behaviour. Again, we see women risking their health in order to achieve an arbitrary ideal which they have little or no say in defining. We must be cognizant of why women are competing, how they are portraying themselves and being portrayed by others, and what bodybuilding is all about in the first place.

It is interesting to note the differences between Rosen's book and one entitled Pumping Iron: The Art and Sport of Bodybuilding (Gaines & Butler, 1981) which focusses on men bodybuilders. While the latter does not offer profiles as Rosen's does, the authors do focus on a few specific competitors and follow them through training and competitions. It is also largely composed of photographs, as is Rosen's book, and it is here that the striking difference emerges. The men are not "arranged" with props to create a certain mood or achieve a certain aesthetic. Rather, the men are photographed largely in the gym working out, or while posing as they would for a competition; that is, to display their muscles.

It is interesting to note as well the differences in the descriptions of men and women bodybuilders offered by Gaines & Butler:

More girls arrived, among them an infectious
cheerful, nut-brown little blonde named Auby Paulick

from Birmingham, Michigan. She is your sturdy farm wife carried to an honestly awesome extreme of strong curves and spooned into a white bikini. Auby hogged the mirror for a while, flexing her flamboyant little legs and chuckling, then she bounced over to the big blue Corbin-Gentry lat machine Rachel had on a halter top and a blue skirt; she has long curly hair, huge Byzantine eyes, and a lithe, well-defined body. . . . But was it sexy, you want to know - Rachel McLish's body, or Auby Paulick's? . . . How sexy were they? Well, not very - not to me at least and I'm not particularly hard to please - and that was what kept bothering me as I watched all those girls pumping and oiling up and check-posing in the mirror (Gaines & Butler, 1981; 212).

Compare this description to the description given of the men bodybuilders:

In the America there was Leon Brown with his perfectly chiseled, wasp-waisted build, and his quiet polished routine; and Bob Birdsong . . . looking very ripped and close to the skin; and mammoth Louie Ferrigno, who ultimately beat out the other two for the title by outsizing if not outfinessing them (Gaines & Butler, 1981; 160).

He himself looked good, he was sure of that - better than he had ever looked before: massive and defined, his waist down and his calves up from a year ago. And he had posed well, drawing his shots out longer, making transitions with more grace and picking his poses better than ever. . . . Every muscle in Ed's forty-year-old body was out along its rim, close to its ultimate potential (Gaines & Butler, 1981; 172).

Gone from the description of the men's activity is the frivolity, the self-centredness and the flamboyance that the authors suggest exists in the women's competition. The "attractiveness" of the men competitors is not at issue, nor their sexiness or desirability. In contrast to the frivolous nature of the women's competition is the utter seriousness of the men's.

Pairs Bodybuilding

There is one final aspect of the sport of bodybuilding which necessitates some analysis in terms of the feminine/masculine dichotomy, and the feminization and cooptation of women's muscle. I refer to the creation of a new type of bodybuilding competition, pairs bodybuilding, in which a man and woman bodybuilder pose together and are judged as a couple.

The inception of pairs bodybuilding is an interesting phenomenon because in the sport we see the potential for women to challenge the stereotypical notion of women as weak, passive and submissive. Yet, in pairs competition the woman is once again in a position of subordination:

In a display of the new bodybuilding entertainment, Boyer Coe and his wife, Valerie, a bodybuilder also, performed a dual posing exhibition, a sort of dance with poses thrown in, during which Boyer picked his wife up a lot and tossed her around (Gaines & Butler, 1981: 217).

She is strong and muscular, yes, but relative to the man she poses with, she is small and under-developed. The male figure is the dominant one and he is in control.

This serves to reiterate femininity in two ways. Firstly, as stated above, the woman is in a position of subordination relative to the man, not only in terms of size and strength, but in terms of physical position as well; that is, she is often physically supported by him.

Secondly, femininity is reinforced by the fact that the couple posing is a heterosexual couple. That is, we have not, over the years, seen the emergence of pairs

bodybuilding within the men's sport or within the women's sport. If muscle bulk, definition and symmetry, are the important factors in bodybuilding, then why not? Why wouldn't we see two men bodybuilders posing together as a couple? It is probably because of homophobia in our culture at large, the fear of being labelled a homosexual, a "pervert," but there is more. The sport has undergone a transformation with the inception of pairs bodybuilding because the pair pose relative to one another; they touch and pose in an interactive way. The emphasis is on the bodies, yes, but also on heterosexual coupling, which has as its essence the feminine/masculine dichotomy and the subordination of women to men.

Constant Factors in the Feminine Ideal in Sport

It is obvious that the feminine ideal is manifested in women's sport in many ways. The ideal plays a role in determining the activities in which women will participate as well as the form that participation will take. Although the feminine ideal and therefore the activities and the form of women's participation may change, there are nevertheless certain aspects of the feminine ideal which remain constant; 1) women athletes and women's sport are defined as Other and therefore less than men athletes and men's sport, 2) heterosexuality is a major premise of the ideal and 3) the feminine ideal serves to limit women's self-determination.

Women's Sport as Other

In our society, sport is considered a male enterprise, and it is most valued as a male practice. As such, sport can be seen to embody the masculine values of aggression, violence and win-at-all-costs. Within sport, higher, faster and stronger are better. Those people who jump the highest, run the fastest and are strongest are deemed to be the best, and they set the standards against which others are judged. Given the physiological differences between men and women as they currently exist, this way of valuing sport most often relegates women to something "less than" men. Furthermore, those sports in which women may have a physiological advantage, sports that involve flexibility for instance, are not as highly valued as sports in which men excel. Women's sport in general is not as valued as men's sport because, according to the logic of gender, what is masculine is *necessarily* better (Shogan, 1989).

Women's sport is not valued as an entity onto itself, but is viewed in relation to men's sport. Men's activity has always been the norm, the Absolute, and women's activity has been defined as Other. The assumption is that male sport is *real* sport, and the implication is that women's sport would be better if it were more like men's sport. For instance, an article about the first dunk in women's college basketball in the U.S. states that many coaches feel that "the 'dunk' - the crowd-pleasing forceful slamming of a basketball through the hoop - will be a significant factor in the growing

popularity of women's collegiate basketball . . ." (Farrell, 1985; 33). In other words, the dunk in women's basketball will help popularize the game because it will make the women's game more like the men's. When women play more forcefully, more like the men, then people will want to watch them play as well. There is no room for valuing the women's game as something apart from the men's game.

The categorization of sports as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" for women's participation and the adaptation of others to "enable" women's participation, the emphasis on fashion in women's sport, and the feminization and sexualization of exercise all act to designate and maintain the woman athlete and women's sport as Other and less than the man athlete and men's sport.

Heterosexuality and the Feminine Ideal in Sport

As argued previously, heterosexuality is a major premise of the feminine ideal. That is, it is assumed that all women want to be paired with men. There are many aspects of women's sport which act to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm. In fact, the categorization of sports as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" for women is based on heterosexist notions of "femininity" and "masculinity."

Currently, women are rewarded most for participating in sports which emphasize appearance, grace and expressiveness, and receive less support and fewer rewards for participating in activities involving team participation, strength or physical contact with an opponent. Men, on the other hand,

are most rewarded for participating in activities that involve strength, endurance and physical contact with an opponent, and are less rewarded when participating in activities involving grace and expressiveness. Thus, masculine/feminine differences are emphasized by men's and women's "appropriate" sport participation. Furthermore, Lenskyj (1984; 66) points out that "those attributes traditionally associated with femininity - passivity, dependence, nurturance - are inextricably linked with the view of women as the submissive, subordinate partners in male/female relationships, a view which is fundamental to patriarchal ideology. Femininity is therefore more than simply an aesthetic . . . it is the concrete manifestation of the subordinate status of women."

Of course, societal factors mitigate the feminine ideal, such that sport participation that once was considered inappropriate for women becomes acceptable. This was the case in the United States during the Second World War when Philip Wrigley instituted a women's professional softball league. The league featured highly skilled players, but many talented applicants were rejected by Wrigley on the grounds that they were too masculine. Heterosexual appeal was a selling point for the league, and the players' behaviour and appearance were dictated by a strict code. Thus, these women softball players and other women "athletes of the 1930s and 1940s escaped public criticism for their unconventional preoccupation with sport only when they paid

the prerequisite attention to the feminine image" (Lenskyj, 1986; 83).

Similarities can be seen today between women's bodybuilding and the women's professional softball league of the 1940s. Women bodybuilders are also forging into new sporting territory, a territory previously considered "men only," and they are presenting an image of women which directly challenges that of the feminine ideal. Yet, as evidenced by bodybuilding magazines and competitions, these women also are concerned about presenting an image of femininity and heterosexual appeal. This image takes the form of a "strong but sexy" apologetic, as well as an emphasis on grace and fluidity in the women's posing routines. Again, men's approval and heterosexual appeal are key.

Heterosexist attitudes are apparent as well when we examine corporate sponsorship of sport. Specifically, I am concerned with advertising during televised (mostly men's) sport, and with the kind of corporations that sponsor women's sporting events. First of all, with rare exceptions, television commercials continue to stereotype women as sex objects or as happy homemakers whose only concern is the shine on the kitchen floor. Furthermore, heterosexual coupling as the goal in life is perhaps the major premise of commercial advertising, and women are again portrayed as sex objects and as nurturant caregivers to men. Thus, while the actual athletic contest itself embodies masculine values,

the stereotypical notions of women are shored up during the breaks in the action.

This stereotypical notion of women is perpetuated *within* men's sports events as well, where women are on the sidelines as cheerleaders. Women are cheerleaders in the literal sense, most notably in collegiate athletics and in men's professional football, and also figuratively as girlfriends, wives and fans. No where in sport is the institution of heterosexuality and the subordinate role of women as care-providers and nurturers to men more evident than in cheerleading where "the presence of attractive, admiring women validates the display of masculinity and machismo on the playing field" (Lenskyj, 1986; 101).

Secondly, in both men's and women's sport, television programmers and potential advertisers are concerned with the profitability of an event. Because women's sport is Other, it does not have the same money-making capacity as men's sport, and it therefore has a more difficult time obtaining corporate sponsorship. When such sponsorship is obtained, it is generally for those sports which emulate the accepted feminine ideal; currently figure skating, golf and tennis (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; 189). Furthermore, the types of corporations that choose to sponsor women's sporting events often seem to be beauty-related industries that manufacture cosmetics and shampoo (Lenskyj, 1986; 102), products which are associated with heterosexual appeal. Once again we see the apologetic at work; the reassurance that

these women, although skilled athletes, are also concerned about their "femininity," and about appearing attractive to men.

Finally, the influence that the dependence on corporate sponsorship can have on women's sport is evidenced as well in the production of women's sports magazines. The publication of a magazine demands large sums of money, and magazines depend on corporate advertising and a large subscription base for survival. Ultimately, in order to appeal to as many sponsors and subscribers as possible, a "softening" of presentation and a conforming to socially acceptable notions of "women athletes" occur. This results, as with televised women's sport, in a preponderance of sponsorship from beauty-related industries and an emphasis on heterosexual glamour. Thus, what was a potentially radical venture becomes subject to and dependent upon male-owned, corporate sponsorship and the restricting notions of femininity and heterosexual attractiveness (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; 213 - 218).

The institution of heterosexuality is reinforced by women's sport in other ways as well. Many women participate in physical activity specifically to enhance their heterosexual attractiveness; to lose weight, tone muscles, develop the chest and to "stay young," all for the purpose of appearing more attractive to men. Furthermore, the private fitness clubs where many women go to attain these ideals often have as a selling point the opportunities that

the club provides to meet members of the other sex (Lenskyj, 1984; 67, 68). Lenskyj also notes the assertions by men that women athletes "were more active sex partners, had greater stamina and were uninhibited about their bodies" (Lenskyj, 1986; 104), the suggestion being that it is desirable for women to become physically fit because it will benefit men.

The fact that women are encouraged to participate in individual as opposed to team sports also reinforces the institution of heterosexuality. It does so by keeping women separate and in competition with one another - not unlike women's experience in the social context where they vie against one another for the attention of men. Keeping women separate prevents them from working together and from discovering their collective power (Lenskyj, 1984; 67). Kidd adds that the qualities of expressiveness and individual participation which are emphasized for women, provide training for women's future roles of wife and mother (Kidd, 1983; 63).

When women participate with no regard to the feminine ideal, they are faced with the label of "lesbian." The label indicates that they have overstepped the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour, and it has worked to divide women and keep them apart. Furthermore, "the femininity of women who play traditionally male sports is suspect unless they make deliberate efforts to meet male-defined standards of attractiveness and to assert their heterosexual orientation. Women who do not comply draw male censure, not

for their sporting performance - which may elicit admiration - but for the threat they pose to male supremacy by putting personal achievement ahead of femininity" (Lenskyj, 1986; 57). Lesbianism is a threat to men not because of the sexual bonding between women, but because of the political implications of women refusing their "rightful" roles as wives and nurturant caregivers to men, and choosing to place women at the centre of their lives (Kidd, 1983; 64).

Despite the pervasiveness of the feminine ideal in women's sport and the heterosexist assumptions that it embodies, not all women participate within its confines. There are women rugby and ice hockey players, women weightlifters who are interested in strength-training as opposed to bodybuilding competitions where they will be judged according to a male aesthetic, and women who participate in a wide range of activities for their own satisfaction and with no regard to heterosexual appeal. Women have formed lesbian sports leagues and outdoor clubs as well as other lesbian-supportive organizations. Lenskyj states, and I agree, that such organizations "pose a significant challenge to the institution of compulsory heterosexuality" (Lenskyj, 1986; 107).

Women's Self-Determination in Sport

The third constant of the feminine ideal in sport is that it limits women's self-determination. The ideal varies according to "cultural codes of conduct" (Duquin, 1982; 18), but what remains constant is the fact that the ideal is

largely defined for women by patriarchal society. Thus, the socially constructed image of the feminine ideal impedes upon women's ability to define and explore for themselves the limits of their potential.

But men's influence on women's sport manifests itself in other ways as well. That men exercise control over women's sport by virtue of the positions of power that they occupy within women's sport, hardly needs stating. Hall & Richardson (1982; 59 - 64) for instance, have documented the under-representation of women in coaching, administration and executive positions in Canadian amateur sport. The fact that it is mostly men in these positions of power in women's sport prevents women from participating in the development of their own autonomous sport experience.

Coaching is an obvious position of power from which men exercise control over women's sport. In addition to denying women self-determination, having men coach women's teams may be problematic in other ways as well, since recent research suggests a high incidence of abusive relationships between men coaches and women athletes. Crosset (1985; 29 - author not cited) defines the abusive coach as "'one who attempts to block independent actions by the athlete, which, in turn, hinders the athlete's development of self.'" He says that the abuse of women athletes by men coaches "ranged from dictating hair styles, posture, and personal relationships, to demanding affection, overt sexual seduction, and beyond", and most often involved "manipulating an athlete's eating

patterns and personal behavior by repeated, constant reference" to her weight (1985; 29).

Crosset states that such abuse often resulted in the athlete's becoming isolated from her peers, and in losing her sense of self. He also suggests that "abusive male coach-female athlete relationships differ from those involving male coaches and male athletes, where abuse usually stops when it reaches a certain point" (1985; 29) because the male athlete rebels. Crosset has been urged by several coaches to continue with research into this phenomena, since many feel that it is a widespread problem, perhaps of the same magnitude as wife battering and incest.

Of relevance to the discussion of the abuse of women athletes is the fact that women joggers have increasingly become the targets of harassment and physical assault from men (Beck Fein, 1984; 25; Lenskyj, 1986; 104). While this obviously does not represent a specific position of power held by men, it is another illustration of how men's power shapes and controls women's physical activity. Perhaps as women continue to break down barriers in their quest for full, self-defined participation in sport, they will continue to meet with the threat of male violence, a threat whose purpose may be to maintain women inside the limits of "acceptable feminine" participation.

Another position of power in women's sport which is largely occupied by men is that of referee. As with coaching, the number of women officials diminishes as the

level of competition improves. Also as with coaching, it is seen as appropriate for men to referee women's sport, but inappropriate for women to officiate the men's game. In fact, it is very difficult for women referees to break into competitive men's sport.

Refereeing can also be seen to reiterate traditional sex roles in that women athletes, typically, are not allowed to "get away with" as much as their male counterparts. That is, physical contact is generally kept under tighter rein in women's games. The physical, rough play that is *expected* in the men's game is *not allowed* in the women's. It is interesting to note the reemergence of the theme of control of women's movement by men.

Sports broadcasting is another position of power where men can be seen to exercise some control over women's sport. While we do see some women announcers for various women's events, the woman is always paired with a man announcer, and she is there as the "colour commentator." This is not to say that this type of commentating is not important or useful, or that it does not require skill, but rather, that it is not the position of control. The principal announcer is a man, and he "brings in" the comments of his woman colleague. Furthermore, while women announcers are sometimes "brought in" for women's events, it is unusual to have a woman broadcasting a men's event.'

'December 27, 1987 marked the first time that a woman has announced, on national television, a National Football League game. It will be interesting to note the reaction to this landmark event.

Men hold more positions of power than women in women's sport because men are perceived to be the experts. Thus, while it is thought beneficial for women to have men coaches, referees and broadcasters because of this perceived greater expertise, women in any position of authority or judgement over men athletes is viewed as inappropriate. All of these positions of power enable men to shape and maintain control over women's sport, while simultaneously denying women their right to self-determination.

Women's self-determination in all aspects of life is vital but may be of special significance in sport and physical activity because of the power inherent in women taking control of their own bodies. Kinsey (1982; 2) suggests that women's participation in physical fitness activities has larger political implications, including improved health and an increased sense of power over maintaining one's health, and the rejection of the traditional image of women as weak, vulnerable, passive and submissive. Stone notes that "Bodies have a politics: The way we live in a society isn't separable from the way we display our bodies," and that for women to feel good about their bodies "represents a profound change in consciousness" (1980; 47).

For women to move freely and boldly in their bodies, to be physically active in ways which do not conform to the feminine ideal, and to develop and project an image of strength is to challenge the patriarchal notion of "woman".

Yet, we must be recognizant always of the ways in which women's physical activity has been coopted, so that what seems like a radical challenge in fact acts to reinforce the status-quo. Women must be allowed the freedom and the resources to explore and define for themselves meaningful sport experience.

Chapter IV

The Masculine Gaze

Men also exert control over women's physical activity and women's lives by way of the masculine gaze. The masculine gaze at women is one of power and authority, and one which women cannot return (Snitow, 1985; 116). The objectifying masculine gaze has been critiqued most often with reference to pornography; the way in which pornography constitutes "women as objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a subject which is essentially male" (Finn, 1985; 82), and where women are "discrete items to be scanned, viewed, taken in, or exchanged, like bits of information" (Manion, 1985; 67).

But many women feel that the "antipornography" feminists' focus on the objectification of women as it occurs in pornography is too narrow. That is, to look at objectification *only* as it occurs in pornography is to negate the impact of the objectified images of women that exist all around us. Secondly, to reject all objectification as "evil" is perhaps too hasty a step. Snitow says that she cannot

. . . imagine a state in which one recognizes all others as fully as one recognizes oneself (if one can even claim to recognize oneself, roundly, fully, without fragmentation). The real issue is a political one. Antipornography activists are right to see oppressive male power in the gaze of men at women: Women cannot gaze back with a similar, defining authority. But, while we all want the transformed sexuality that will be ours when we are neither dependent nor afraid, the antipornography campaign introduces misleading goals into our struggle when it intimates that in a feminist world

we will never objectify anyone, never take the part for the whole, never abandon ourselves to mindlessness or the intensities of feeling that link sex with childhood, death, the terrors and pleasures of the oceanic (Snitow, 1985; 116).

Valverde further asserts that "the task is not to reject all objectification in favour of an impossible ideal of pure subjectivity, but rather to integrate the two aspects of human existence" (Valverde, 1985; 46). Valverde's critique of the objectification of women raises some important questions. She feels that a certain amount of objectification is necessary for any interaction, including erotic interaction, to occur. She sees the decisions each of us makes in terms of the clothes we wear and the hairstyle we choose, as the presentation of the self as an object to the rest of the world. She goes on to say that often we may find ourselves attracted to a particular body or body type, and that this involves objectification.

The type of objectification found in pornography, "whereby women are turned into *mere* objects, anonymous creatures with no will of their own, no names and no distinctive features" (Valverde, 1985; 45, italics in original), is the type to which Valverde argues feminists should rightly object. But she does not wish to ban objectification altogether. Rather, she sees the goal as being "to remain a full human subject even while someone is considering us as a potential erotic object, and vice versa" (Valverde, 1985; 46).

Valverde's critique of the good and bad in objectification is a valuable one. I have often felt ill at ease with the antipornography feminists' critique of objectification, since I feel it is something I myself do, to no one's great detriment. That is, I can enjoy looking at a particular body without any desire to know the person within that body. I also often find myself absorbed in the lines and shapes that a particular body forms, from an aesthetic or artistic point of view, and enjoy objectifying in that way as well. My purpose, however, while self-satisfying, does not involve making the objectified person's needs subservient to my own, as might be argued occurs in pornography. Enjoying someone's physicality, though objectifying, cannot be construed in the same manner as the situation where the objectified individual becomes totally subservient to the objectifier.

Of critical importance here is who is doing the looking. In a world where women are constructed as objects and men as subjects, the female gaze does not have the power or the authority of the male gaze. The practice of looking reproduces and reinforces the masculine/feminine difference and marks men as *men*, as "dominants in a sexually bifurcated and hierarchized social order" (Finn, 1985; 87).

Frye's concept of the "arrogant eye" provides further insight here. She says that as males assume the attributes of masculinity, they become arrogant viewers who "see with arrogant eyes which organize everything seen with reference

to themselves and their own interests" (1983; 67). She contrasts the look of the arrogant eye with the look of the loving eye:

The loving eye does not make the object of perception into something edible, does not try to assimilate it, does not reduce it to the size of the seer's desire, fear and imagination, and hence does not have to simplify. It knows the complexity of the other as something which will forever present new things to be known (Frye, 1983; 76).

Frye's conception of the arrogant and the loving eye is key to understanding the difference between the masculine and the feminine gaze, and the degree of objectification that occurs under each. As long as men look with arrogant eyes which situate themselves as subjects in the world and define women as Other, it is difficult for the masculine gaze at women not to be an objectifying one; one which women find "can rob us of our possibilities, alienate us from ourselves and our options for choice, and make us feel in the service of the other" (Murphy, 1987; 114, 115). In contrast, the look of the loving eye, while still objectifying to a degree, does not consume the object of perception. Nor is there any desire, on the part of the perceiver, to make the object of perception subservient. The object of perception is recognized by the loving eye as separate and complex.

The Masculine Gaze in Women's Sport

It is perhaps by virtue of the masculine gaze that men exercise ultimate control over women's sport. That is,

because sport is perceived to be masculine and men the experts, women's sport is always viewed *in reference to* men's sport. Because women have been and continue to be dependent on men for the models of participation and for approval - because women have been "molded by the arrogating eye" (Frye, 1983; 77) - men stand in final judgement. Even in sports where women stretch the boundaries of "acceptability," the masculine gaze is the definitive one.

Some degree of objectification occurs in both women's and men's sport that has a high aesthetic component; it is the nature of these kinds of sports that the body necessarily become the focus. Yet, the patriarchal gaze which defines "woman" defines "man" as well, and to be a man is to be a subject in the world. While the man athlete who competes in sports with a high aesthetic component may be somewhat objectified, he nonetheless remains a subject because he can return the gaze of authority.

In these aesthetic sports, the woman athlete's body is important in a way that the man athlete's is not. Adaptations are made and/or clothing is available which enables women athletes to participate *as women*. This is not to say that the woman athlete's body is judged as part of the competition, or that she is awarded marks on the basis of her appearance. However, I do want to suggest that how the woman athlete looks *apart from* the competition is of some importance. She is expected to be "pretty" or "cute," and hence, the "trappings" of femininity - makeup and hair

ribbons for example. There is no parallel to these "trappings" for men athletes. How they appear outside of the competition is of no relevance. Therefore, there is the potential, it would seem, for the woman athlete's body to become a focus and something to be looked at apart from the athletic performance.

Furthermore, although in certain sports, figure skating for example, artifice may be required of both men and women athletes, the connotation differs. The woman athlete is expected to present herself in a manner that is in keeping with the feminine ideal, and to be "feminine" is to be "less than." To present herself as feminine, the woman athlete must wear "special" clothing and accessories, and smile through difficult and sometimes dangerous manoeuvres in order to comply with the feminine ideal of woman as "beautiful" and compliant.

It is because of this necessity for artifice on the part of women athletes, and because they must embody the feminine ideal that the objectifying masculine gaze is so much more objectifying for the woman athlete. It is because she is forced to lose some of herself in order to compete - that she must comply with her own objectification in order to be successful:

She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life (Berger, 1972; 46).

A further degree of objectification can be seen to occur in sport when the men spectators watch only to see women's bodies, and are not interested in the athletic skills of the performer. The spectator views the woman athlete in terms of his own sexual desire or pleasure, and "women are turned into *mere* objects, anonymous creatures with no will of their own, no names and no distinctive features" (Valverde, 1985; 45). The description by Butler and Gaines of the women bodybuilders which was highlighted above provides an example. The authors main concern is with the sexual attractiveness of the women. Sexual objectification is also manifested in some media coverage where the focus is on the athlete's physical appearance rather than her athletic abilities (Lenskyj, 1986; 102).

While sexual objectification can occur anywhere in a sport context, certain activities actually encourage objectification. Cheerleading is an example of such an activity. Women cheerleaders in professional men's sport exemplify Manion's description of the objectification that occurs in pornography where women become "discreet items to be scanned, viewed, taken in . . ." (1985; 67). The camera moves down the row of cheerleaders, surveying, taking in the exposed flesh and artificial smiles. The women are there to provide something to "look at" in-between plays, something to keep the spectator's interest. Furthermore, given the scant costumes worn by cheerleaders, it can be argued that they are there specifically to keep men spectators

entertained by providing sexual titillation.

Televised aerobics programs provide another example of physical activity which tends to have a highly objectifying component. MacNeill (1985), in her analysis of the "20 Minute Workout," details the way in which things like camera angles and movement, stage setting, and the instructor's language work to enhance objectification. For instance, the lighting and background of the stage suggest a "mystical environment", one which is "devoid of context or historical placement" (MacNeill, 1985; 68). Also, the entire body of the women participants is very rarely visible on the screen. Rather, the focus is on the midsection, reflecting contemporary women's concern with 'slimming down and toning up.'

In addition, the camera angles and distance of the camera from the subject change constantly and the camera and/or stage are always moving. MacNeill states that these techniques of filming make it difficult for the novice to perform the exercises safely, since one must continually interpret not only the exercises, but the ever-changing perceptual information.

MacNeill also notes the use of "it" in phrases such as "pick it up" and "bounce it down," and says that these phrases are not only poor instructional cues, but work to objectify the female body. Furthermore, MacNeill observes that the body language used by the Workout instructors "connotes a very sensual message through stances,

arrangements, movements and facial expressions" (1985; 72), and that the camera angles chosen are often "rude" and "sexually explicit" (1985; 70).

The utilisation of these techniques act to objectify the models who perform the exercises on 20 Minute Workout; the constant movement, the scanning motion of the camera, and the focussing on specific parts of the body all serve to inhibit the viewer from forming a comprehensive, unified view of the either the program or the participants.

MacNeill thus concludes that the 20 Minute Workout program objectifies the women participants and connotes them as sexually available to the viewer, and that the program is really for the male voyeur. She includes in the concept of the male voyeur women who watch through "male eyes," and states that the program not only condones men's objectification of women, but teaches women self-objectification (1985; 99). In Berger's words:

Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight (Berger; 1972; 47).

The power inherent in the masculine gaze enables men to exert control over women's sport simply by looking. The masculine gaze is one of authority because men exist as subjects in the world and women as objects, and also because men are perceived as experts in the realm of sport. The gaze of men is the definitive one, and one which can "rob women

of their possibilities." In looking at women's sport, men maintain women's position as subordinant. Women's sport experience is denigrated when it is perceived by the arrogating eye, which views woman always in reference to itself and its needs. The masculine gaze prevents women from defining and participating in sport in a truly autonomous and self-determined manner.

Chapter V

Sport and Pornography

Throughout this paper, I have shown how women are limited, objectified and controlled in their participation in sport. I see these things as existing on a continuum. At the beginning of the continuum is the emphasis on the feminine ideal. Women's participation in sport is most acceptable when it upholds the current notion of femininity. Whatever it is that constitutes the feminine, it is always less valued than that which is considered masculine. The emphasis on feminine ideal in sport therefore acts to define and control women's participation, to reiterate women's inferior position as Other, to deny women their right to self-determination, and to rob them of the empowering potential that exists in sport participation.

Toward the middle of the continuum is the objectifying masculine gaze. At this point, the parameters for women's participation have been established, and not only must women be cognizant of the boundaries, but their participation is subject to the scrutiny of the masculine viewer. By virtue of their position as subjects in the world, men are able to control and limit women's sport participation merely by looking. As Murphy says, for women, "The recognition that we are always under the gaze of the other evidences that our freedom is held in constant check. We live, to varying degrees, as objects in the world of others" (Murphy, 1987; 115). Furthermore, the objectifying masculine gaze

denigrates women athletes when it constitutes them as sexual objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a masculine subject.

We have now arrived at the other end of the continuum where instances of pornographic sport will be examined. Before discussing the sport examples, however, it may be useful to give a brief overview of the scope of the debates that have been raging around the subject of pornography for several years now.

There are many different perspectives on pornography, but perhaps the three major categories are conservative, liberal and feminist, the latter of which actually encompasses several perspectives. The conservative perspective views pornography as immoral and offensive. Conservatives feel that sex should only occur between a husband and wife, and that pornography is, therefore, "dirty" sex. Pornography threatens the sanctity of marriage as well as the traditional family and traditional Christian values. In combating pornography the conservatives invoke the law of God as well as community standards. Many call for state-enforced censorship of a vast array of materials, including pro-choice and sex education literature (Court, 1980).

The liberal perspective sees pornography as a form of resistance to the cultural repression of sexuality. Liberals do not limit sexual activity to the boundaries of marriage. For them, freedom of speech is the supreme civil liberty and

censorship is abhorred (Gagnon & Simon, 1975).

The "feminist perspective" is somewhat of a misnomer in that there is no one feminist camp. On the issue of women's sexuality, Ferguson sees feminists as divided into two groups:

The first camp, the radical feminists, holds that sexuality in a male-dominant society involves danger - that is, that sexual practices perpetuate violence against women. The opposing camp, self-styled "anti-prudes," I term "libertarian feminists," for whom the key feature of sexuality is the potentially liberating aspects of the exchange of pleasure between consenting partners (Ferguson, 1984; 106).

Within the radical feminist perspective is the critique of pornography as violence against women. Russell and Lederer (1980) object to pornography on the grounds that all pornography objectifies women and thus denies them the identity of "human being." They further state that research on the *effects* of pornography has ignored the problem of sexism; specifically "whether pornography reinforces and increases contempt of and hatred of women; whether it glorifies, trivializes, or demeans the suffering of raped and battered women; whether it makes it more difficult for men and women to relate to one another as human beings" (Russell & Lederer, 1980; 13).

The libertarian (as Ferguson calls them) or anticensorship feminists¹⁰ are uneasy with the radical feminist focus on pornography and sexuality in general. Diamond argues that "No matter how insidious and antiwoman

¹⁰See, for example, Varda Burstyn (ed.), Women Against Censorship and Mariana Valverde Sex, Power and Pleasure.

much of pornography may be, it is not the primary cause of the repression of women's autonomous sexuality and the continued existence of male domination. Social and economic structures that create dependency on the sex market, reproduce the powerlessness of women and perpetuate women's cultural objectification create misogynist culture, and it is against these we must take aim" (Diamond, 1985; 52).

While the anticensorship feminists agree with the critique of pornography as constructing "women as objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a subject which is essentially male" (Finn, 1985; 82) and that this is harmful to women, they carry the critique further to say that women are not objectified only by pornography. Steele (1985) criticizes the ways in which gender is portrayed in advertising, how women in our culture are often portrayed as powerless and as existing for men, and says that these messages are as dangerous, if not more so, than those conveyed by pornography because of advertising's omnipresence and insidiousness.

The anticensorship group is very concerned that enacting censorship laws against pornography would give the state the power to determine what is and what is not pornographic. As Kostash says, "the state is hardly a neutral, let alone prowoman, institution that can be captured and directed toward our projects; it is specific to the development of capitalist patriarchy" (1985; 37). State-controlled censorship would therefore only add to the

ways in which women can be controlled. Valverde and Weir add that such censorship is even more threatening to lesbians, since lesbian-created images of lesbian culture are very likely to be defined as pornographic - and thus censored - by a patriarchal judiciary (1985; 104).

Instances of Pornographic Sport

Pornography here is defined in terms of those elements of women's degradation in sport that have been developed previously in this paper, namely, the emphasis on women participating within the confines of the feminine ideal, which entails women's subordination, and the objectifying masculine gaze. While each of these elements can act by themselves or in conjunction with one another to denigrate women's participation in sport, this does not mean that the activity is pornographic. The final element which must be present in order to define the sporting activity as pornographic, is the connoting of the woman athlete as sexually available to, or providing sexual titillation for, the masculine viewer.

A key facet of this definition is the sexual subordination of women to men; the focus is on the unequal distribution of power between the two. Furthermore, in depicting women as sexual objects available for men's pleasure, pornography degrades women.

The themes of women's submission and degradation are

common in feminist definitions of pornography.¹¹ While "intent to arouse" is also sometimes included in definitions of pornography,¹² I do not see it as a necessary condition. "A depiction can be pornographic even if it has neither the intention nor the function of arousing its audience sexually" (Copp, 1983; 19). I would argue that this is the case with several of the sport examples that follow. For instance, I do not think it is the intention of gymnastics competitions or individual gymnasts to arouse their audience sexually. Yet, the postures of submission which are expected as part of the performance, the feminine attire, and the eroticization of women's bodies and of their physical activity do connote the athlete as sexually available and may have the effect of sexually arousing the audience. The connoting of women as sexually available to men is such an insidious practice that *intention* is not required. The activity, however, is still pornographic.

Finally, this exercise represents a departure from the norm in that I am concerned with assessing *actual* behaviour. That is, while I examine some pictorial, written and video representations for their pornographic content - which is the more usual practice - I also focus on the sports themselves and define *behaviour* as pornographic, rather than simply the *representation of* that behaviour.

¹¹See Longino (1980; 43), MacKinnon and Dworkin in MacKinnon (1987; 262), and Ridington (1983; 9).

¹²See The British Committee on Obscenity and Pornography in Copp (1983; 18), and Bill C-114 (p. 2).

The following then, is an examination of those instances in sport where I see women being connoted as sexually available to the masculine viewer. This is not to say that I am defining the sport itself as pornographic. Rather, I am attempting to discuss elements of that sport, or specific instances within that sport, which are pornographic. This does not mean, in most instances, that the sport has nothing of value, but rather that how it or certain aspects of it currently exist, portray women in a pornographic manner.

It is useful to discuss the examples of pornographic sport under two categories: 1) the participation/portrayal of women in women's sport and 2) the participation/portrayal of women in men's sport. The term "participation/portrayal" allows for the fact that sometimes the focus is on women's actual participation in a sport, and other times on how women are portrayed in a sport by various media.

The Participation/Portrayal of Women in Women's Sport

The first example of pornographic sport is evidenced by women's bodybuilding. Within the sport of women's bodybuilding, it is specifically the act of posing in front of a panel of judges and an audience that is pornographic. That is, the actual weight lifting, stretching and aerobic training that is done in preparation for the bodybuilding contest are not pornographic activities. But during the posing routines, the emphasis on femininity in the women's competition - in the guise of flexibility and fluidity, and

the continual smiling out at the audience - act in conjunction with the revealing bikini bottoms worn by the competitors to connote the women as sexually available to the masculine viewer.

The outfits worn by the women make a difference in whether or not the women are connoted as being sexually available. If an ordinary bathing suit bottom is worn, and the buttocks are covered, there is not the same connotation of sexual availability. However, it is a fine line, because the other elements are still present; the emphasis on femininity, men's control and the objectifying masculine gaze.

Another aspect of women's bodybuilding which deserves analysis is the portrayal of women bodybuilders in bodybuilding magazines. In short, the women are portrayed in a way that reassures the reader of the women bodybuilders' sexiness and of their availability to the masculine viewer. While there are some photographs of the women actually lifting weights, they are mostly posed in dance-like positions which emphasize grace and fluidity, while the men are shown working out or posing as they would for a competition. Furthermore, the women are often photographed with their hands behind their head or looking over their shoulder into the camera, positions which suggest vulnerability as well as a coy seductiveness. Trix Rosen's book on women's bodybuilding, as discussed above, exemplifies the pornographic portrayal of women bodybuilders

that is also evident in bodybuilding magazines.

Televised aerobics programs of the genre critiqued by MacNeill also can be defined as pornographic. They are pornographic because of the sexualization of both the exercises and the performer of the exercise:

The erotic pulsing, the open-legged stances, the pelvic tilt backwards (rather than forward for proper posture and safety during exercise), the swing of the arms, the pointing of the middle finger down (rather than the index finger pointing up as in dance positioning) very obtrusively sells the use of aerobic activity to enhance and display female sex appeal (MacNeill, 1985; 72).

MacNeill further points to "short eye gazes into the camera, breathing in with a widely opened mouth, blowing the lips outward during exhalation, and seductive looks upward through the bangs" (MacNeill, 1985; 73). All of these things combined work to sexualize the exercises and the instructor, and to connote the instructor as sexually available to the viewer.

Women's gymnastics is another example of a women's sport which has pornographic elements. While angered by the limitations placed on women's gymnastics and finding some aspects of the sport degrading to women, I had never considered it to be pornographic. However, Renate Prinz's article brought to the fore the fuzziness of the line separating the pornographic from the non-pornographic. She notes the emphasis on malleability for women gymnasts and on strength for the men, and sees in the women's tumbling routines a series of "gestures of submission" (Prinz, 1987; 176). Prinz remarks as well that the high cut hip of the

women's leotard serves to lengthen the appearance of the legs and focus attention on the pubic area. I would add to this that the cut of the leotard is such that it continually rides up at the back, thus revealing the buttocks.

While there is already an emphasis on the feminine ideal in women's gymnastics as evidenced by the emphasis on flexibility as opposed to strength and the necessity of "the smile", the leotard specifically acts to sexualize the sport. Add to this the power of the masculine gaze, and it can be argued that the women gymnasts are portrayed as being sexually available to the masculine viewer.

Prinz refers to a graphic used in an advertisement for an upcoming gymnastics meet and its accompanying text to further illustrate the ways in which women's gymnastics has been sexualized.

The caption reads: 'A treat in store this weekend for gymnastics fans. A guest performance by some of the world's finest apparatus artistes . . .' The 'treat' referred to is the inter-state tournament announced in the article - yet could you imagine a male gymnast at the bar in the accompanying photograph? Image and caption are arranged in a way that demands the woman gymnast be read as the 'treat' readers have in store. The sports journalist mediates between gymnast and reader; s/he maps out a way of reading women's gymnastics, by organizing the gaze turned by the spectator on the gymnast in specific ways. Photos and accompanying text together effect a closure on the meanings associated with the activity of the gymnasts; in sexualizing the practice of gymnastics, the journalists produce a lasting association between women's gymnastics and sexuality, and constitute the gymnast as sexual object (Prinz, 1987; 183).

Of relevance as well to the discussion of gymnastics as pornographic is the concept of infantilization and the

related eating disorder of bulimia. Women's gymnastics in recent years has been inundated by very young competitors. The reasoning has been that the bodies of pre-pubescent girls are more suited to the flexibility, rotation and twists demanded of the sport. Burstyn suggests, however, that

It's far more likely that the sport of gymnastics began to value girls because the media turned Korbut and Comaneci into stars. They could easily have celebrated Ludmila Turisceva, who was the overall women's champion at the '72 games, or Irena Kurzenstein, who set a world record in the 400 metres in 1976 and won her seventh gold medal over four games (1986; 12).

Stressing the importance of youthful bodies encourages participants to prevent their body's transition into puberty, since this would result in an increase in body fat and height, two "conditions" thought to be detrimental to performance. To do this, gymnasts become obsessed with their diets and often do not consume adequate calories or nutrients to sustain their health and energy level. Furthermore, the importance of maintaining a prepubescent form has resulted in the manifestation, by many gymnasts, of severe eating disorders such as bulimia (Burstyn, 1986; 11).¹³

It is relevant to this analysis to note that keeping the young woman gymnast prepubescent also keeps her (relatively) powerless. The message is that it is "bad" to

¹³In fact, as evidenced by a recent television special on gymnastics, there are programs now in place which inform coaches as to the dangers of eating disorders and the symptoms to watch for in their athletes.

grow up - to become an adult; that she will be more successful, more *valued* if she remains small and powerless - that she will be more successful if she *does not* develop her full potential. The youthful, undeveloped image of the women gymnasts is in direct contrast to that of the more mature, muscular men gymnasts, once again emphasizing men's relative position of power (Burstyn, 1986; 12).

An analysis of women's figure skating reveals pornographic elements very similar to those found in women's gymnastics. That is, there is an emphasis again on fluidity and expressiveness as opposed to strength in the women's programs. Let me reiterate that it is not that fluidity and expressiveness are pornographic, but rather that they are manifestations of the gender hierarchy in which women are subordinate to masculine power. The point here is that the fluidity and expressiveness enacted by the women signify their subservience to men, and this is a key factor in defining the sport as pornographic.

The "gestures of submission" to which Prinz refers can be seen in figure skating as well; the open arms, the bowing down, the tilting of the head. The submissive quality of such gestures is heightened in pairs figure skating where the woman performs with her man partner. This is especially true given that the woman spends much of the routine in the arms of her partner, and is often physically supported by him during throws, lifts and various other manoeuvres. Of additional consideration is the women's skating costume, a

dress-like outfit that accentuates the legs and the breasts. Finally, the smile is again an important fixture which represents women's cheerful compliance with her own oppression.

As with gymnastics, the behaviours described above can be seen to denigrate women figure skaters and limit their participation. ~~But~~ is the woman figure skater connoted as sexually available to the masculine viewer? Again, there is a fine line dividing the pornographic from the non-pornographic. This line came dramatically to the fore during the 1988 Winter Olympics with the performances of Katarina Witt. The uproar was over the amount of thigh revealed by the high-cut leg of Witt's costume, and by her sexual, flirtatious manner. Journalists described her as a "sex bombshell", "Dear Katarina of the thighs that never stop" (Fotheringham, 1988; C3), "Frankly flirtatious" (Levin, 1988; 12), and "the East German seductress" (O'Hara, 1988; 15). Much was made of Witt's beauty and the effect that it might have on the mostly men judges. The Edmonton Journal (Mayes, 1988; A6) ran an editorial cartoon depicting three men judges, their eyes bulging, holding up the scores of 36-24-36, remarking, of course, on Witt's physical appearance as opposed to her skating performance.

Obviously, the men judges and the masculine viewers across the country and the world were deriving some degree of sexual titillation from watching Witt perform. And Witt has learned that "blatantly" accentuating her natural beauty

and being "frankly flirtatious" in her performances help her to win competitions. Thus, Witt is connoted as being sexually available to the masculine viewers, and therefore her performances are pornographic. Yet, it is incredible to me that her behaviour has caused such an uproar. The difference between Witt's conduct and that of other women figure skaters is merely one of degree. Risque costumes and coy, flirtatious behaviour have long been a part of women's figure skating, and they are both condoned and rewarded. It would seem that the sport of women's figure skating especially encourages the women to sexualize their performances, and that in extreme instances, the skater can be seen to be providing some degree of titillation for the masculine viewers. These extreme instances then, I would define as pornographic.

The Participation/Portrayal of Women in Men's Sport

Before examining specific examples of women's participation/portrayal in men's sport, it is useful to step back and look at men's sport as a whole. While it is not helpful to define all of men's sport as pornographic, there is, nonetheless, an underlying ideology in men's sport as it currently exists which devalues and degrades women.

Hoch calls sport a "school for sexism" (1980; 9) that unites men in masculinist rituals and excludes women, thus strengthening the notion of male supremacy. Bruce Kidd describes sport as a male preserve in which women are relegated to the sidelines. He further states that the

"effect of sports is also to perpetuate patriarchy by reinforcing the sexual division of labor. By giving males exciting opportunities, preaching that the qualities they learn from them are 'masculine,' and preventing girls and women from learning in the same situations, sports confirm the prejudice that males are a breed apart" (Kidd, 1987; 255).

This sexism which permeates sport is insidious. However, some men's sport is much more blatant in condoning and perpetuating the domination of women by men. Allen Sack, a former football player at the University of Notre Dame, says that the humiliation of women is actually a part of post rugby match celebrations. He goes on to state that men learn how to be violent in football and rugby, and that this violent behaviour carries over into the man athlete's expression of his sexuality, so much so that men learn how to rape from their involvement in athletics:

She doesn't really mean no, she means yes. And I think that oftentimes athletic behaviour . . . socializes young males to not understand those kinds of boundaries. We're to dominate. We dominate opponents, we dominate other athletes, we dominate our friends on the athletic field, and of course, we dominate women (Burstyn, 1986; 4).

Hoch concurs with Sack and points to the type of locker room verbiage in which "women are just 'cunts,' 'gash,' 'pieces of ass,'" and words like "punish" and "suffer" are used by the men athletes to describe sex with their women partners (Hoch, 1980; 13, 14).

It is obvious that the men athletes described above are connoting women as sexual objects who are available to satisfy the men's needs. In this sense, their behaviour is pornographic. This is not to say, however, that sports such as football and rugby are entirely pornographic. But it must be recognized, first, that sport in general serves to reiterate the feminine/masculine dichotomy, and women's position as Other and subordinate to men. Secondly, the notions of violence and domination that are valued in much of men's sport appear to have a carry-over effect on the attitudes that the men athletes - and men generally - have toward women; that is, that it is acceptable for men to physically and sexually dominate women.

There are several more specific examples of the pornographic participation/portrayal of women in men's sport. The first example is the ballgirl in professional baseball. Do they serve the same purpose as ballboys? In my viewing experience, the boys - and they are boys - who do this job appear to be quite comfortable with a ballglove on their hand, and with retrieving and throwing the ball. The ballgirls - who are, in fact, young women - often do not have this same ease in performing their task. In fact, they have often looked fairly inept. What is most noticeable about them is their "feminine" appearance; their "hot pants" (in contrast to the ballboy's baseball uniform), and their large breasts. This woman does not remind one at all of the highly skilled women who play competitive softball, and who

would be quite efficient as "ballgirls".

Therefore, it would appear that the ballgirl does serve a very different purpose than the ballboy. She is something amusing to watch while there is a stoppage in play, and she also provides perhaps some degree of sexual titillation. It is obvious at least that, as with cheerleaders, the sexuality and "feminine" appearance of the ballgirl are the keys.

There is another, much more blatant example from professional baseball which utilizes women in a similar manner. There is one team which employs, again, a very "feminine" woman to approach members of the opposing team during stoppages in play to kiss and/or hug them. The purpose is to distract the player from performing his baseball duties by - means of arousing him sexually. But the main purpose is to entertain the crowd. Sexual titillation is used to keep the attention of the masculine spectator.

Both of these baseball examples serve to reiterate the feminine ideal in the world of sport. But what is more, they show women being used and manipulated for male gain and male titillation. Furthermore, women are characterized as athletically inept and as existing to serve men. The women here are degraded and devalued, not only as women, but as athletes as well.

Cheerleading is another example of the pornographic participation of women in men's sport. It hardly seems necessary to state the case in this instance, since it is

practically a premise of our society that cheerleaders are sexually available to men. For instance, there seems to be a preponderance of movies with titles such as "Cheerleader Weekend", which have as their focus the sexual promiscuity of cheerleaders.

Cheerleaders in professional men's sport are not an event in themselves, but rather they respond to the needs of the men's team and perform for the crowd during time-outs (or, in other words, when nothing is happening). The cheerleaders are there to provide something to look at during stoppages in play, and it is the physical attractiveness of the cheerleaders that is emphasized. Uniforms such as those worn by the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders are designed to accentuate the legs and the breasts. Finally, the cheerleaders' ever-present smiles suggest their compliance and willingness to please. The smile reassures the male viewer that he is powerful, and that his power is "rightfully held" (Cline & Spender, 1987; 98). All of these factors converge to connote the cheerleaders as sexually available to male viewer.

The role of women in the sport of boxing is similar to their role as cheerleaders in men's professional sport. In-between the rounds of a fight, a woman dressed in a bathing suit (or something similarly revealing) and smiling incessantly at the male audience, walks around the ring holding up a placard announcing the number of the upcoming round. As with cheerleaders, the woman is there solely for

the titillation of the masculine viewer, to keep his interest and provide him with something to look at between rounds.

The annual swimsuit issue of Sports Illustrated magazine is a very specific example of the participation/portrayal of women in men's sport which warrants some analysis. While not a sport in itself, the magazine represents and records men's sporting participation. The focus of Sports Illustrated is the coverage of sports events and the athletes who participate in them - predominantly men's sports events and men athletes.

It is significant that a magazine devoted to the coverage of men's sport would choose to publish, each year, a swimsuit issue, an issue which devotes one section to photographs of women in bathing suits. While it is touted as "the swimsuit issue", it is hard to believe that manufacturers actually make real swimsuits out of lace, or out of material that becomes see-through once it is wet. See-through clothing and wet clothing, as opposed to full nudity, are used to reveal more of the models' bodies. The term "Swimsuit Issue" is used as an attempt to legitimize what are, in fact, pornographic pictures of women. Regardless of their clothing, or lack of it, the models in the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue are, like the women in pornography magazines, constituted as passive objects to be looked at. They gaze into the camera seductively and are

posed in positions of passivity and vulnerability. In short, they are portrayed as available to the masculine viewer. For the subscribers to Sports Illustrated, according to a current television commercial, the swimsuit issue is "the icing on the cake" - good enough to eat.

Perhaps in a world where women are making strides into previously all-male domains such as bodybuilding, the swimsuit issue serves to reassure the man athlete and sports consumer of his superior position. He is reassured by knowing that there are still plenty of women out there who are honoured to appear in the pages of Sports Illustrated simply because men like to look at them; that although some women reject the limiting confines of the feminine ideal, there are just as many who are happy to emulate the ideal and reap the "rewards."

Messages Conveyed by Pornographic Sport

What kinds of messages are conveyed by these examples of pornographic sport? What do girls and women infer about their bodies and their athletic involvement when they see women athletes portrayed as sexual objects?

Women are encouraged to participate in a feminine way and are rewarded for sexualizing their performances. Furthermore, it would seem that women's sport has to be sexy in order to receive media coverage. Katarina Witt's quest for a gold medal in the winter Olympics probably was not hindered by the tremendous amount of publicity that she received. The media's fascination with her "East German

seductress" image will likely be helpful to Witt as well in her pursuit of an acting career.

While I do not think curler Marilyn Darte's antics on the ice put her into the category of pornographic sport, she does sexualize her performances, and she too has received publicity for doing so. This observation is supported by the fact that the "20 Minute Workout," an aerobic exercise program which is replete with sexual imagery and innuendo, "is broadcast eight times per day in major cities and produces enormous media revenues (MacNeill, 1985; 86). If these are the images of active women which are most available to the public, then the stereotypical notions of women as feminine, subservient sex objects are simply being reinforced and imposed upon the woman athlete.

Women bodybuilders do present a challenge to the image of women as physically weak, yet we have seen how the image of the strong woman is redefined as sexy and desirable to men, thereby deflating the challenge. There is a tendency toward apologetics in bodybuilding as well, usually in the form of an assertion of the woman's sexiness and attraction to men. The message here is that there are limits to what is considered acceptable participation for women, and if these limits are transgressed the woman athlete has her sexuality questioned. Thus women learn that to participate outside the norm of feminine sport is to be a "sexual pervert."

In men's sport, women take their places on the sidelines and cheer on the men competitors. Women athletes

are denigrated and trivialized in their participation in men's sport because they are there only to provide the masculine viewer with something to look at during stoppages in play. Furthermore, the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue, which portrays women as passive sex objects, and the ever-smiling cheerleaders standing patiently on the sidelines, bolster the image of sport as a masculine domain. There is the suggestion, as well, that these women are the prizes for the valiant competitors, the "icing on the cake." The theme of men's dominance and women's submission is again reaffirmed.

Sport Images in Pornography and the Messages They Convey

The intersection of sport and pornography is again apparent when we approach the problem from the other side and examine pornography for sport images. For example, MacKinnon notes that Playboy magazine has begun sexualizing athletic women (1987; 122). The notion that there might be some sort of relationship between sport and pornography first occurred to me when I saw a short video presentation which had been compiled by Maude Barlow. At the time, Barlow was involved in a campaign to educate the public about pornography. The video consisted of short excerpts from pornographic material that was available on Canadian television. Of the five clips that comprised the video, three of them were situated in a sport context. I will briefly describe these scenes and then take a closer look at

the messages that they convey.

The first clip began with a shot of a teenage girl in the shower at her high school. Members of the boys' football team then entered the area and proceeded to chase her around the shower. The boys wore towels around their waists while the girl was completely nude.

The second scene focussed on a Playboy Bunnies Superstar Contest which showed the "Bunnies" competing in an obstacle course. The women were either topless or their clothes were in the process of falling off, and they were portrayed as totally inept at the various tasks which they were trying to accomplish. Both the name and the set-up of the course suggested an alliance with the real Superstars competition which features athletes from different sports in contest with one another. The alliance may have been suggested in order to emphasize the farcical nature of the proceedings.

A golf lesson provided the theme of the third excerpt. This scene showed a man standing behind a teenage girl who was dressed in a cheerleader outfit. The girl had a golf club and the man put his arms around her, as if to show her the correct way to hold the club. The girl moved back so that her buttocks were pressed against the man's pelvis, looked up at him innocently and said something like, "Is this how I do it?"

While an analysis based on three examples may be somewhat suggestive, it is a useful process, I think, in

developing a preliminary understanding of the messages communicated by such images. There are three themes which emerge out of this video presentation: 1)the denigration of women athletes and women's sport, 2)the sexualization of women athletes and sport to provide titillation for men, and 3)the perpetuation of the notion of men as dominant and women as subordinated. Obviously, these themes are in keeping with those which were evident in the instances of pornographic sport.

Denigration of the women athletes and women's sport is evidenced in two ways. In the shower scene, the young woman athlete is denigrated and degraded in that she is portrayed as nothing more than a conquest for the men athletes. The Playboy and golf examples, on the other hand, denigrate the women by showing them to be inept and in need of men's assistance.

The women in all three of the clips are further denigrated in that they are constituted as sexual objects for men's titillation. The girl runs nude through the showers with the boys in pursuit, the Playboy Bunnies prance around semi-nude while the camera focusses on their bouncing breasts and buttocks, and the young cheerleader coyly propositions her "instructor." In each case the women are connoted as "athletes" (in a general sense) by their surroundings. But as athletes they are trivialized and degraded, and simultaneously they provide sexual excitement for the masculine viewer. Denigration and degradation of

women and men's sexual pleasure are thus interconnected.

Furthermore, this interconnection perpetuates the notion of woman as subordinate to men. Contrary to the liberal assertion that pornography challenges our repressed notions of sexuality is the feminist critique which argues that pornography operates to validate and sustain the norms of men's dominance and women's submissiveness (Manion, 1985; 67). All of the women are connoted as existing for men's pleasure, and their needs are therefore subservient to those of men. The theme of men's dominance and women's submission is most pronounced in the shower scene where the threat of rape is palpable. Perhaps the message here is that, just as the threat and the reality of men's physical and sexual violence keeps women in their place in the world (Chomiak et al, n.d.), so too may the threat of violence by men athletes maintain women in their position of inferiority in sport. MacKinnon makes the connection between the control and violation of women's sexuality and the control of women's sport participation. Specifically, she argues that to be feminine, both within and outside of sport, has meant to be *weaker than* men. This then has implications for women's ability to resist their men attackers (1987; 118).

A final illustration of the use of sport images in pornography is the "pseudo-sport" of mud wrestling. I use the term pseudo-sport to indicate that although mud wrestling has some sport elements and may be considered a sport by some, there can be no mistaking that mud wrestling

is for the masculine viewer, and specifically for men's titillation. In mud wrestling, two bikini-clad women engage in body-to-body contact in a mud-filled "ring." Situating the contest in mud negates any physical skills which might be utilized in a real wrestling match. Instead, the contest is reduced to a stereotypic cat fight between two women where anything goes.

The lesbian connotation in mud wrestling should not go unnoticed, that is, that men are excited *specifically* by seeing two women in physical contact with one another. Valverde argues that pornographic depictions of lesbians allow "room for the symbolic phallus, and explicitly refrain from challenging male assumptions about having access to all women" (1985; 98). Thus men's domination of women is again assured.

It is unknown whether pornographic depictions such as these actually cause men to degrade and dominate women, but as McCormack notes, "a cultural milieu in which women are always perceived as sex objects contributes to the devaluation of women. Goals such as greater participation in public life, equal pay for work of equal value, day care, etc., are that much more difficult to achieve without the strong positive images that establish credibility" (1985; 199).

Girls and women already face many obstacles in their pursuit of their sport goals. The images created by the interplay of sport and pornography further impede women's

quest for self-determined sport by reiterating the "naturalness" of the woman athlete's subordinate status, and by portraying her as existing only for men's sexual consumption.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

Summary

It was the purpose of this paper to discuss the ways in which the feminine ideal is currently manifested in sport and the effect this has on determining the "what" and "how" of women's participation. The masculine gaze was also examined with respect to the controlling influence that it exerts over women's physical activity. It was then argued that, in certain sports, the women athletes are connoted as being sexually available to the masculine viewer, and that this defined that sport instance as pornographic. Some pornography was then examined with respect to its use of sport imagery, and the implications of these findings were briefly discussed.

Suggestions for Further Research

While only a preliminary investigation, the analysis undertaken in this thesis raises several questions about the intersection of sport and pornography. First of all, was the fact that three of the five excerpts that appeared in the Barlow video were situated in a sport context simply coincidence, or are sport images common in pornography? A study of pornographic videos and magazines to determine the extent of such imagery, and the specific content of the images would be informative. It would also be useful to

correlate the occurrence of such depictions with women's sporting achievements. This might provide some insight into the hypothesis that, as women's athletic performances continue to improve, pornographic images of women athletes are created by men in attempt to reassert their dominance over women.

The sexualization of women's sport generally and women athletes in particular also deserve further analysis. It would be interesting, for instance, to examine the sexualization of women's sport from a historical perspective. When did women athletes first begin to sexualize their athletic performances, and how was this sexualization manifested? If the sexualization of women's sport as it occurs in the examples discussed above is viewed as a more extreme form of the feminine apologetic than has occurred in the past, what does this suggest for women's future sport involvement? Will the pornographic portrayal of athletic women become increasingly more commonplace?

Another possibility for future research is suggested by Susan Bordo's (1985) paper on anorexia nervosa. She observes that women's bodybuilding and the condition of anorexia nervosa exhibit similar themes, namely an emphasis on self-denial, purity, will and perfection, and a conceptualization of the body as alien (Bordo, 1985; 83, 84). Given that "the social manipulation of the female body (is) an absolutely central strategy in the maintenance of power relations between the sexes" (Bordo, 1985; 76, 77), an

examination of the commonalities evidenced by bodybuilding and anorexia may have tremendous implications for understanding how women experience their physicality in the world and how they attempt to control it.

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